

REMARKS

This Amendment is in response to the Office Action dated July 20, 2009 (the Action).

Claims 1, 4-7, 10-12, 14 and 15 are pending, and Claims 19 and 20 are withdrawn from consideration. Claims 1, 4-7, 10-12 and 14-15 stand rejected in the Action under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over DE 2838514 to Kirchkamp (Kirchkamp) and U.S. Patent No. 1,148,491 to Hall (Hall).¹ Claim 4 has been canceled.

Claim 1 has been amended to the following form (emphasis added):

1. A gland plate comprising:
a rigid, annular element comprising at least two axially spaced, radially extending walls having a thickness of from about 0.1 to 4mm, the radially extending walls having a center orifice in the center of the radially extending walls and an outer circumferential perimeter extending around an outer edge of the radially extending walls;
an outer wall extending axially and continuously between the radially extending walls and around the outer circumferential perimeter of the radially extending walls;
an inner wall extending axially and continuously between the radially extending walls and around the center orifice; and
at least one additional orifice formed in the at least two radially extending walls between the center orifice and the outer circumferential perimeter of the radially extending walls and defined by a first axially extending circumferential flange in one of the two radially extending walls and a second axially extending circumferential flange in the other of the two radially extending walls, wherein the first and second flanges are joined such that the first and second flanges extend around the at least one additional orifice and between the two axially spaced, radially extending walls, wherein the outer wall, the inner wall, and the first and second flanges together enclose a hollow interior volume between the axially spaced, radially extending walls.

¹ It is noted that Hall is omitted from the rejection under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) on page 2 of the Action; however, Hall is discussed on page 5 of the Action. Accordingly, the rejections are treated in this Amendment as based on Kirchkamp and Hall.

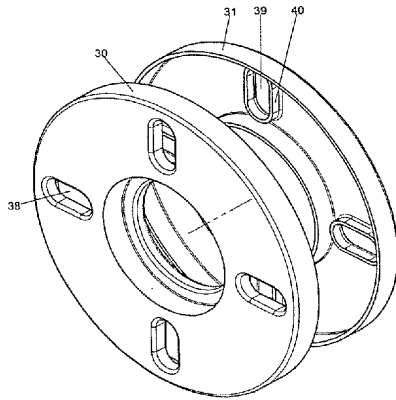


Figure 5

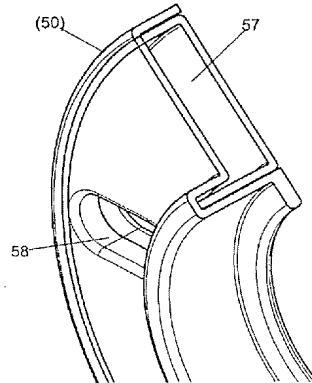


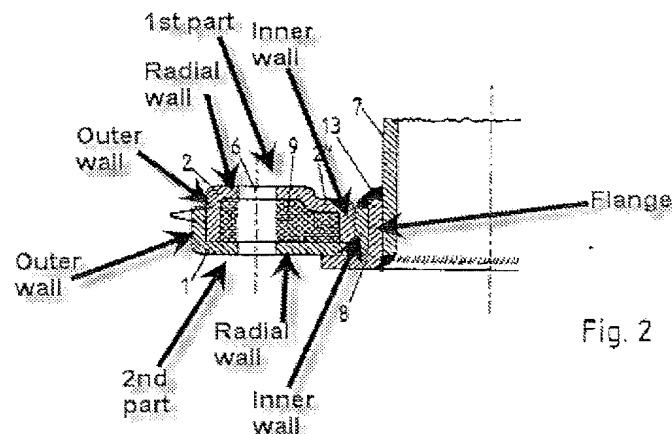
Figure 7

Independent Claims 14 and 15 recite analogous recitations as those emphasized above with respect to Claim 1. Figure 5 is an exploded isometric view of two pressed components according to some embodiments of the invention. When the two components of Figure 5 are pressed together, they form the gland plate recited in Claim 1, as shown in Figure 7. As shown in Figure 5, the additional orifice 39 is defined by a flange in the radially extending walls between the center orifice and the outer circumferential perimeter of the radially extending walls. In this configuration, strengthening is provided directly around the additional orifice(s).

In addition, independent Claims 1, 14 and 15 have been amended to further clarify that the outer wall, the inner wall, and the first and second flanges (which define the at least one additional orifice as exemplified by the orifice 39) together enclose a hollow interior volume between the axially spaced, radially extending walls. Support for this amendment can be found, for example, in Figures 5 and 7 (which illustrates the hollow portion 57), and on page 9, lines 26-28.

The Action concedes that Kirchkamp does not disclose that the at least one additional orifice has a first axially extending circumferential flange in one of the two radially extending walls and a second axially extending circumferential flange in the other of the two radially extending walls, or that the first and second flanges are joined such that the first and second flanges extend around the at least one additional orifice and between the two axially spaced radially extending walls. As clearly seen in annotated Figure 2 of Kirchkamp, provided in the

Action, Kirchkamp does not disclose that the at least one additional orifice has first and second axially extending circumferential flanges as recited in the independent claims (*i.e.*, there are no flanges around the hole 6, which the Action identifies as analogous to the at least one additional orifice).

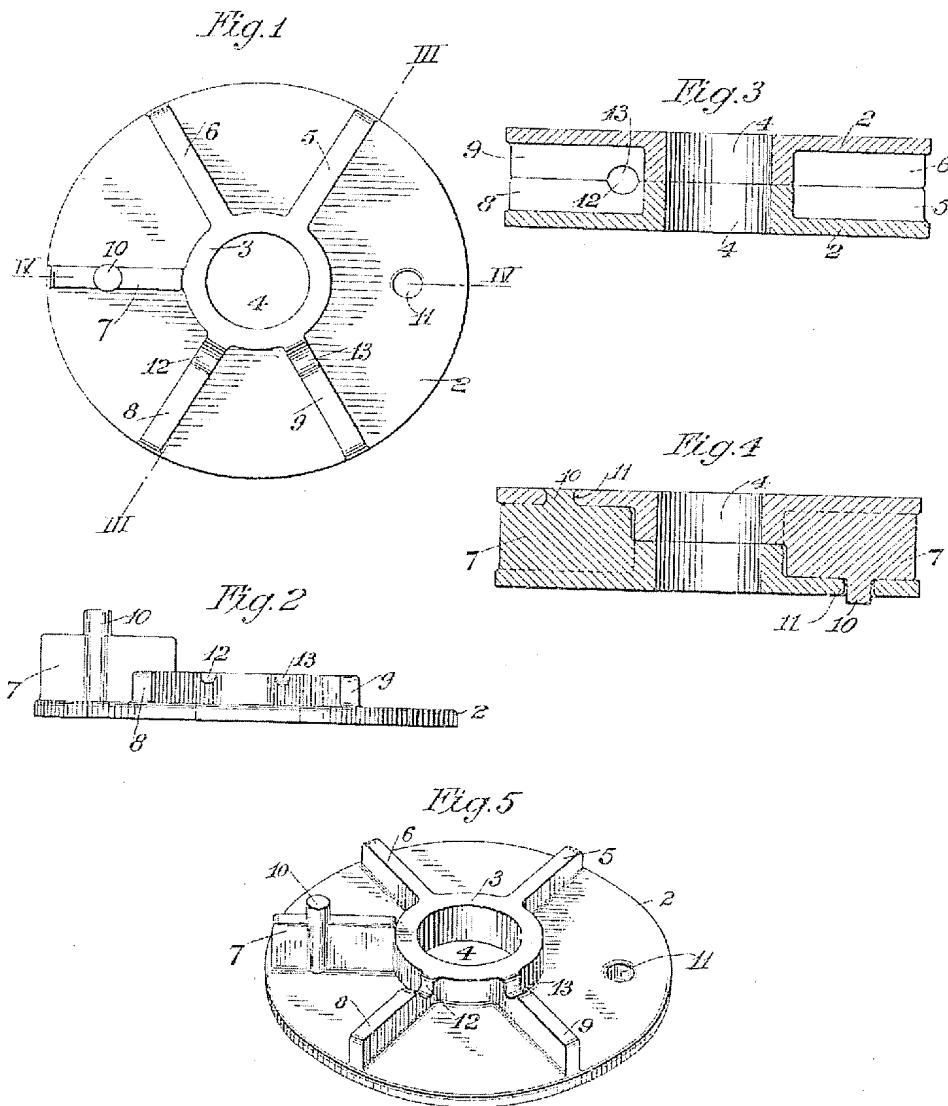


Moreover, nothing in Kirchkamp discloses or suggests that that the outer wall, the inner wall, and the first and second flanges together enclose a hollow interior volume between the axially spaced, radially extending walls.

The Action cites Hall as allegedly disclosing the first and second flanges that are joined such that the first and second flanges extend around the at least one additional orifice and between the two axially spaced radially extending walls.

However, Hall merely discloses a spool-type washer. Applicants submit that a washer is generally understood to be a thin plate, typically disk-shaped, with a hole that is normally used to distribute the load of a threaded fastener and/or to serve as a spacer when the threaded fastener is fastened to another surface through the hole. Figures 1-5 of the washer in Hall are reproduced below. Applicants submit that the disclosure of the collar 3 around the bolt hole 4 of the washer in Hall does not supply the missing elements of Kirchkamp, *i.e.*, a first axially extending circumferential flange in one of the two radially extending walls and a second axially extending circumferential flange in the other of the two radially extending walls, wherein the first and second flanges are joined such that the first and second flanges extend around the at least one additional orifice and between the two axially spaced radially

extending walls, and the orifice is formed in the at least two radially extending walls between the center orifice and the outer circumferential perimeter of the radially extending walls.



Hall clearly illustrates that the collar 3 is in the center of the washer, and therefore, Applicants submit that the collar 3 of Hall is analogous to the inner wall of Kirchkamp, and as such, adds nothing to the disclosure of Kirchkamp. The only orifice that is in a radially extending wall between the inner wall and the outer perimeter (Hall does not disclose an outer wall), is the hole 11. However, hole 11 clearly does not include a flange.

In addition, even if a washer as proposed by Hall were used in the device of Kirchkamp, Applicants submit that one of skill in the art would use the washer in Hall in a conventional washer/bolt configuration. Stated otherwise, the washer in Hall would likely be placed on the top or bottom of the hole 6 and adjacent one of the elements identified in the Office Action as allegedly analogous to the radial wall, *i.e.*, in a conventional washer/bolt configuration such that the washer would be on the exterior of the structure of Kirchkamp. Accordingly, Applicants submit that there is no motivation or reason to extract the collar 3 from the washer Hall and apply it in a manner that is entirely different from a conventional washer/bolt configuration so as to provide a flange as proposed in the Action.

In addition, Hall and Kirchkamp do not disclose or render obvious that the outer wall, the inner wall, and the first and second flanges together enclose a hollow interior volume between the axially spaced, radially extending walls as recited in the independent claims. As noted above and as conceded in the Action, Kirchkamp does not even disclose the first and second flanges that are joined such that the first and second flanges extend around the at least one additional orifice and between the two axially spaced radially extending walls. The collar 3 in Hall, which the Action identifies as analogous to the first and second flanges, also does not enclose a hollow interior volume.

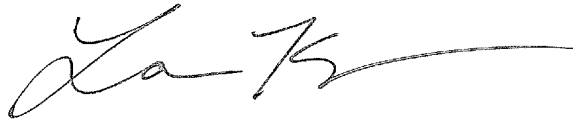
For at least the reasons discussed above, Applicants submit that the cited prior art does not disclose or render obvious all of the recitations of independent Claims 1, 15 and 16. Claims 5-7 and 10-12 depend from Claim 1 and are patentable at least per their dependence from Claim 1. Accordingly, Applicants request that the rejection of Claims 1, 5-7, 10-12 and 15-16 be withdrawn.

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Filed: August 19, 2005
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CONCLUSION

Accordingly, Applicants submit that the present application is in condition for allowance and the same is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner have any matters outstanding of resolution, he is encouraged to telephone the undersigned at 919-854-1400 for expeditious handling.

Respectfully submitted,



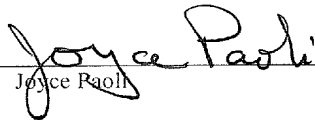
Laura M. Kelley
Registration No.: 48,441

USPTO Customer No. 20792
Myers Bigel Sibley & Sajovec
Post Office Box 37428
Raleigh, North Carolina 27627
Telephone: 919/854-1400
Facsimile: 919/854-1401

CERTIFICATION OF TRANSMISSION

I hereby certify that this correspondence is being transmitted via the Office electronic filing system in accordance with § 1.6(a)(4) to the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office on October 20, 2009.

Signature: _____


Joyce Paoli